

# Being the True Parental You



**The  
LAFAYA  
Way**

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Co-Published by  
Leverage Press/Hybrid Global Publishing  
301 E 57th Street, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10022

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Manufactured in the United States of America, or in the  
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The Lafaya Way®

Becoming the True Parental You

ISBN: 978-1-948181-34-1

Cover Design by: Cynthia Lay  
Interior Design: Leverage Press

# Table of Contents

## **Preface**

## **Introduction**

### **Chapter 1**

Parental Pothole One

Past Experiences

### **Chapter 2**

Parental Pothole Two

Parental Grief

### **Chapter 3**

Parental Pothole Three

The Hidden Effects of Family Dynamics

### **Chapter 4**

Parental Pothole Four

Lack of Understanding of Yours and Others' Truest Intentions

### **Chapter 5**

Parental Pothole Five

Upsetting Aspie Behaviors

### **Chapter 6**

Parental Pothole Six

Conserving Your Energy

### **Chapter 7**

Parental Pothole Seven

The Importance of Self-Care

### **Chapter 8**

Conclusion

# Chapter 1

## Parental Pothole 1

### Past Experiences

*“When we can take responsibility for how we have participated in the cover-up of the original pain... we can open the doors to the lost spark of life that is imprisoned within us.”*

-Donald Kalsched, Ph. D.

Negative past experiences can contribute to the fears and frustrations that impact your ability to make the best “situationally” fitting decisions. Strong parental reactions are due in some part to the desire not to behave as badly as your parents behaved towards you.

Impactful negative experiences may include abusive and/or neglectful parents, “the perfect parent(s)” who “always” got everything “right” and made you feel like you “never” got anything right or even being the “black sheep” of your family of origin.

People tend to adopt one of two ideas when it comes to raising their children:

1. They make the decision to parent in a style completely different from the way they were raised; or
2. By choice or default, adopt the ways of their own parents.

It is not a logical prospect to raise your child as you were raised. The expectation that your child would respond in the same way you responded, even though he/she has a different personality and/or temperament, growing up in a different time, with very different influences than you did is presumptuous.

That old tried and true excuse, “Well, that’s how my parents raised me, and I turned out just fine,” is an out-of-date excuse. I’ve heard this sentiment repeatedly from unhappy parents who are often anxious, depressed, and/or filled with anger.

The hint that you did not turn out just fine is in the struggle that you have with positively relating to your child and likely others in your life.

Before you get upset about what I am writing, this is not to dump on you. This is me telling you the only way things are going to improve for you is if you acknowledge you have things that need improvement in both your thoughts and interactions, in order to get more of what you truly want.

**“Trying to change another person without first changing yourself is a fruitless task.”**

Evaluate your personal experiences that may have contributed to the thoughts and feelings currently working against you.

To address the potential effects of past experiences, you must first understand emotional triggers (stimuli that provoke strong emotional reactions). Triggers are often attributed to past experiences and unrealistic expectations.

If you find yourself having a strong emotional reaction when dealing with a situation, ask yourself:

“Is this an area of sensitivity based on experience(s) I’ve had with my parents or other caregivers?”

**Hint:** If you think, “If I had done\_\_\_ with my parents, they would have\_\_\_,” then, there is an issue with past experiences impacting you.

Such thoughts usually mean you feel as if you have been overly accommodating to an ungrateful child in ways you would have liked from your parents and you are upset with the child’s lack of gratitude.

This type of thought leads to more anger toward the child, which is rooted in your desire to be rewarded/appreciated for trying to be a better parent than your parents were. In this case, your responses have far less to do with what the child is doing or not doing at the moment and more to do with you not getting your needs met.

Below are suggestions for how to prevent the strong emotional responses rooted in past experiences:

**1. Ask Questions**

“Am I triggered due to past experiences?”

“Does my child’s behavior warrant the strong reaction that I am having? Would I have the same feeling if someone else told me their child was doing something similar?”

**2. Repeat to Yourself Out Loud (or think to yourself as many times as you need)**

“My past experiences do not dictate my current reactions. I focus on adequate solutions based on my child’s behavior.”

**3. Take a Moment to Problem-Solve**

Think of logical consequences\* for the child’s behavior. If you cannot think of any on your own in that moment, ask another parent or professional for suggestions.

**\*Remember**, you want the consequences to alter the behaviors you dislike. It is not your goal to punish or tear down your child who most likely already suffers from poor self-esteem.

**4. Forgive Yourself**

Keep in mind that it may be difficult to prevent the effects of past experiences. Give yourself a break if you don’t get it “right” the first, second, or even the fifth time.

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